GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2247
ANSWERED ON:14.03.2007
RELAXATION OF VISA RULES BY PAK
Khanna Shri Avinash Rai

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Pakistan has announced the relaxation of Visa restrictions for Indian tourists;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government is contemplating to open separate tourist section in Passport Offices;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether there is any proposal to encourage the tourists to visit religious places located in Pakistan; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE)

(a-b) No. However a new Visa agreement is being discussed with Pakistan.

(c) No.

(d) Does not arise.

(e-f) Visits of pilgrims between India and Pakistan are covered under the Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines-1974. This provides for three Hindu pilgrimages (total 800 pilgrims) and four Sikh pilgrimages (total 7500 pilgrims) from India to Pakistan and five Muslim pilgrimages

(total 1350 pilgrims) from Pakistan to India. Both Governments facilitate the transportation, security, accommodation for stay of the pilgrims during their visits under the above Protocol. Government have proposed to Pakistan government liberalisation of the bilateral visa regime to include Pilgrim Visas to each other's nationals desiring to visit religious shrines. During the Secretary (Culture)-level talks held in Islamabad on July 26-27, 2005 both countries agreed to expand the Bilateral Protocol on Visit to the Religious Shrines, 1974 to increase the number of shrines and the number of pilgrims. India has proposed an expanded list of shrines in both countries for inclusion in the Bil! ateral Protocol.